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# Congress cautioned against stifling NSC

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Members of the Tower commission cautioned Congress yesterday against restricting future diplomatic initiatives by the White House National Security Council.

They suggested instead Congress concentrate on stripping ambiguities from laws governing the NSC.

Former Sen. John Tower, Texas Republican, and the other two members — former Secretary of State Edmund Muskie and former National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft — suggested Congress issue its own critique of the way the Reagan administration may have abused the 40-year-old NSC system.

It would be a mistake to pass new laws restricting the NSC from activities that could help initiate quiet, diplomatic missions in future administrations, they said in testimony before the House Armed Services Committee.

Congress should restrain itself from increasing NSC regulation and must ask itself, 'Is the system wrong or was it improperly used?' Mr. Muskie said.

But Rep. Larry Hopkins, Kentucky Republican, said: "If Congress takes no action, it looks like we are satisfied" with the way the NSC operated during the fair.

Rep. Les Aspin, Wisconsin Democrat and committee chairman, said he felt Congress must do something to prevent administrations from using the NSC as a means to hide foreign policy that would outrage the nation.

"As long as you are going to have

a situation where laws can inhibit the operating agencies [such as the CIA] by reporting to Congress, it seems to me that is always going to offer a temptation . . . to run the operation out of the NSC staff so you don't have to report it to Congress," Mr. Aspin said.

"And unless we change something here some subsequent administration in the future is going to succumb to that temptation," he said.

But Mr. Tower said the president must have the flexibility to formulate foreign policy initiatives, such as the Nixon administration's successful private diplomatic channels to China.

"You can fine tune this all you want to and that is not going to protect you from errors in judgment and flawed policy that is made by presidents, and is made by Congress from time to time," Mr. Tower said.

The president must be able to take "the long view" in developing foreign policy, Mr. Tower said, "and it should not be subject to frequent change by whim."

"I think one of the frustrations suffered at the White House" which led to the apparent diversion of funds to the Nicaraguan resistance, "is that the Congress ran hot and cold. There was inconsistency," Mr. Tower said.

"One day you are permitted it to do something, the next day you are forbidden to do it," he said. "This is a frustration that operates on the president."

"The inability to maintain any long-term consistency in policy that makes us reliable allies, or predicable adversaries."